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FLOOR DEBATE

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when traveling from any place from which they have been called to active duty. This has been replaced with new language which says that coverage begins from the instant such persons commence responding to a call to active duty. Almost three years ago, a constituent requested my help in clarifying the meaning of this section. The question was then, as it apparently continues to be, at what point when responding to a call do emergency volunteer personnel qualify for workers' compensation coverage. I'll give you an example. A fire call comes through in the middle of the night, the fire whistle blows or the fireman is called, whatever. He jumps out of bed but, unfortunately, he gets tangled up in the blankets, wrenches his back, and then, subsequently, requires hospitalization and surgery. The fireman never made it to the fire. In fact, he never got out of his front door. In fact, he barely got beyond the foot of his bed. But was that individual operating within the scope of his duties at the time of the injury? The current statutory language indicates that he was. After all, it says that emergency workers are covered when traveling from any place from where they have been called to active duty. The example that I gave you actually did happen, and this individual's workers' compensation claim was denied. When this problem was first brought to my attention, we obtained a history of the original enacting language from 1963. After reading the history, it was clear to me that the legislative intent of the bill was to extend workers' comp coverage to specified emergency personnel beyond merely the site of the emergency, and I would like to quote the bill's introducer: The bill simply provides an extension of the workers' compensation law that covers the firemen from the time the whistle blows rather than from the time that they reach the scene of the fire or the fire station. This point was emphasized in both the statement of intent for the bill and during the subsequent floor debate. To be on the safe side, we requested an Attorney General's opinion, which says that a firefighter who receives a call at home and is injured there while responding to that call would be entitled to workers' compensation benefits under the current act. After I distributed this information to my constituent, I assumed that the issue was resolved. The insurance companies would realize what was intended by the statute and would respond accordingly. Well, not quite. I continued to receive reports that some